SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS PROJECT

JUSTICE CENTRE/COURT SITE VISITS 2002-2003

Focus Group Guide

Names/positions of court group participants: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Court site where interviewed: _____

Date interviewed: _____

Interviewed by: ☐Anna ☐Yetta

Purpose of Focus Group

- examine areas and stages of interaction between SRLs and court staff
- assess greatest needs for courts and SRLs at court sites (physical and program needs)
- gain insight into volume by court and case type (criminal, civil) of self-represented litigant (SRL)

We hope to get information about the special needs of the self-represented litigants and how Court Services might be able to help them and the administration of the courts in the future. To conduct this research we are visiting court sites to conduct interviews and to observe the operation of the courts.

We want to get the views of counter staff, supervisors, court reporters and court managers, in a manner that is efficient and effective for your schedules.

We realize you have limited time to take from your busy schedules. We would like to have between 40-60 minutes of your time to ask the questions listed below and to brainstorm solutions. We

anticipate taking about 3-5 minutes per question. Because there won't be much time to be reflective at the meeting, it would be best if the questions are reviewed in advance of the group discussion. Both Yetta and Anna will attend, one to act as the primary facilitator and the other to take notes.

Questions for court staff

1. At what **stage of the court process** is a SRL asking the most questions of court staff?
   □pre-filing?

   □filing?

   □pre-trial?

   □trial?

   □post-trial?

2. At **which of these stages are you most likely to spend time** with a SRL, at his/her request?
   □pre-filing?

   □filing?

   □pre-trial?

   □trial?

   □post-trial?

3. Describe how much **time** it takes, on average, to **answer an inquiry** by a self-represented litigant:

   - at counter
   - by phone

   and how much time you spend doing this on an average day:

   - minutes/day
   - hours/day

   and/or per week:

4. What are **some of the questions** most often asked at:

- pre-filing stage?
- filing stage?
- pre-trial stage?
- trial stage?
- post-trial stage?

5. In your experience, **at which stage** is it most important to provide **information to the SRL**:
□pre-filing?

□filing?

□pre-trial?

□trial?

□post-trial?

6. What is the **impact of SRLs**:

- on your job?

- on the functioning of the court? (delays, longer court hearings, security problems, interrupted court hearings, anything else)

7. In your experience, what are the **greatest frustrations** in dealing with an SRL:

- ☐ can't understand?
- ☐ lack of knowledge?
- ☐ lack of initiative?
- ☐ lack of follow up?
- ☐ bad attitude?
- ☐ your inability to give good service?
- ☐ other? (please describe

8. What are some of the **biggest mistakes** a SRL makes in his/her individual court processes:
   - ☐ filling out forms wrong?
   - ☐ getting court processes wrong?
   - ☐ lack of knowledge of rules of evidence?
   - ☐ generally unprepared?
   - ☐ can't draft orders and documents like affidavits etc. correctly?
   - ☐ not doing good job for themselves? (describe, if other than the reasons above)

9. What **management or information measures** have you been using to deal with the challenge of the SRL, and how successful are they? (Get them to elicit what coping methods or systems they use, formal or informal. Are there special lineups, times or staff who deals with the SRL? Special information materials or resource lists they give the SRL?)

10. What would you like to be able to **give the SRL as information** that isn't there now:
    a) in **what form**- verbal, video or print?

    b) on **what subject matters** (subject areas or referral or resource guides...)?

11. Do you have **other suggestions or solutions** for Court Services to cope with the SRL and

the challenges they create for courts and other areas?

12. Did you know about this project before being asked to participate in this discussion? When?

13. Have you seen copies of the SRL Pamphlet, Court Services information for Family Division, Supreme Court information sheets, Video "Your Day in Court" ?

14. What space is there in your court facility to hold an Information Centre for SRL's?